

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

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ENDANGERED SNAIL, CLAM AND CRUSTACEAN STUDY ORDERED

Sixty-one species of possibly endangered or threatened mollusks and crustaceans will be the subject of intensive studies by the Federal Government, 18 States, and the District of Columbia.

The study is being called for by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to determine the status of 16 California snails, 35 Midwestern pearly mussels and 10 Central Atlantic crustaceans.

If the fraternal snail, the orange-footed pimpleback pearly mussel, and Pizzini's scud are not household names, then their plight is probably equally obscure. A combination of problems like water pollution, channelization, highways, housing developments, dredging, and poor erosion control has caused severe population declines in these species of mollusks and crustaceans. For example, the dromedary pearly mussel, familiar only in the Powell and Clinch Rivers of Virginia and Tennessee, is barely surviving in its environment of acid mine waste pollution, poorly treated municipal wastes, fly ash waste, and by channelization of the upper Clinch.

Though they seem inconsequential in size, mussels and crustaceans are an indispensable part of the living world. Besides fitting into the food chain these creatures have recently been recognized as being able to produce poisons, antibiotics, tranquilizers, antispasmodics, and antiseptic chemicals in their systems. Scientists believe these unique abilities can be used as models for the development of synthetic drugs.

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 directs the Department of the Interior, through the Fish and Wildlife Service, to conduct a review of those species which are "threatened" or "endangered." A notice of this review was published in the Federal Register and will affect the following States: California, Oklahoma, Virginia, Maryland, Tennessee, Missouri, Arkansas, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Kansas, Alabama, Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia. The Fish and Wildlife Service has notified the Governors of these States, and the Mayor of the District of Columbia of this review. All interested parties are requested to submit any factual information which is germane to this review to: Director, Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

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